

I write to testify regarding S.B. No. 184 and H.B. No. 5262  
My name is Ava M. Biffer

while it is clear that here, in the Constitution State of all places, voting must be accessible to truly provide each of us with a voice in governance at every level, I write today on a personal level.

Under normal circumstances, I would be among the most privileged of voters. I'm well-educated and understand all the directions and requirements involved in the process of voting. I am blessed with the ability to vote without the threat that taking time to go to my polling place or standing in line will result in the loss of my employment. I have a car and do not have to depend on public transportation being available. I do not have to walk a long distance, worry about physical challenges, or cope with inclement weather. Many voters do not have these advantages.

However, I now find that, despite these advantages, my right to vote is threatened. The COVID pandemic has added risks I cannot control. I find myself in serious risks groups. Worse, my husband is in two of the most severe risk groups. If I go to the polls, I take the very real chance that I will not only risk compromising my own health: if infected by that exposure, I could bring home a deadly plague that my husband almost certainly would not survive. Since vaccination and boosters are not required of all and mask mandates have been lifted, that risk has exponentially increased.

I respectfully ask that you extend the COVID "excuse" allowing this as a valid reason to use an absentee ballot. Once voters have the opportunity to enable no-excuse absentee voting, this COVID exception will no longer be needed. All those who do not have the advantages I have will have a fair opportunity to vote. However, our chance to speak through a referendum on no-excuse absentee voting has not yet been realized.

Please take this opportunity to provide all of us with a safe alternative to the risks we face from the pandemic by approving these bills.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

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